

Devon, PA — The residents of Chester and Delaware counties are unified in their concerns over the future of the environment in Pennsylvania and the rest of the nation. Approximately 250 local residents and environmental experts turned out for a Town Hall meeting at the Main Line Unitarian Church in Devon this afternoon to share their concerns and ideas with Congressman Joe Sestak (D-PA). The meeting was hosted by the Church's ECO Ecology Task Force.

— “I am deeply inspired by the passion of the people in these local communities to address growing environmental concerns,” Congressman Sestak said. “As my colleagues and I fight in Congress to force our government to face the reality of such issues as global warming and our country's over-dependence on foreign oil, we are emboldened by the united resolve of our citizens to demand that these issues be given the highest national priority. These are not just environmental and health issues. They are at the core of our economic future stability and our national security.”

The Town Hall Meeting on Energy and the Environment followed a roundtable discussion the Congressman held in May with local constituents, business owners, environmentalists and energy experts to discuss how energy prices are affecting consumers and businesses, the need to invest in energy-saving technology, and the important role of alternative energies and technologies.

The Congressman talked to audience members about a number of legislative proposals he has supported that address the nation's energy crisis. One such bill is the New Direction for Energy Dependence, National Security, and Consumer Protection which contains many initiatives including encouraging the United States to re-engage in and lead efforts to reach a global warming agreement with all major emitters, including China, India and Brazil; exploration of environmentally-friendly alternate energy resources; promotion of “Green Job” worker training programs; and providing assistance to small businesses to meet their energy needs.

“In the past six years, Delaware County has lost 762 small businesses, due largely to the changes in our global economy,” the Congressman said. “By investing in small businesses to help them access more economical and ecologically-appropriate energy resources, such as renewable electric power, energy-efficient vehicles, and the construction of energy-efficient buildings, we are investing in the future of the Delaware Valley.” Congressman Sestak is Vice Chairman of the House Small Business Committee.

The New Direction legislation incorporates provisions of the Green Jobs Act, which provides \$125 million in funding to establish national and state job training programs to train a quality workforce for “green” jobs such as solar panel manufacturers and green building construction workers, and to address job shortages that are impairing the growth of green industries.

Another legislative initiative discussed at the Town Hall was the Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Tax Act which extends through 2012 the tax credit for the production of electricity from renewable resources, including wind, closed and open-loop biomass, geothermal energy, small irrigation power, municipal solid waste, and qualified hydropower. To pay for the

renewable energy tax incentives, the bill repealed approximately \$16 billion in tax breaks to oil and gas companies and closes a tax loophole that allows big oil and gas companies to understate their foreign oil and gas extraction income.

“This legislation will encourage manufacturers to build appliances that push the boundaries of efficiency, it will help working families afford fuel-efficient vehicles and appliances, and it will help businesses to create energy-efficient workplaces,” Congressman Sestak said. Both the New Direction and Renewable Energy bills have passed the House with the Congressman’s support.

In addition, the Congressman this week voted in favor of the Energy Storage Technology Advancement Act of 2007 which will increase funding for energy research to improve industrial energy efficiency and energy storage for electrical grids and hybrid vehicles. He also voted for passage of the Industrial Energy Efficiency Research and Development Act of 2007 which will set aside \$750 million for research into new innovations and technologies to enhance industrial efficiency and the economic competitiveness of this country’s industrial sector.

Today’s Town Hall meeting was the second such meeting Congressman Sestak has conducted at the Main Line Unitarian Church. In May, the Congressman conducted a town Hall meeting on the Iraq War. The Church is widely recognized for a broad, vigorous social action commitment. The Church has sponsored small banks in South America, they have provided close support of a school in El Salvador, they have participated in racial justice programs; they have assisted the Visual Arts group in their outreach to prisoners, blind artists, and disadvantaged inner city youth; and they run a program for battered women and children.

The Church’s ECO Ecology Task Force which recently conducted a “Bright Idea” program encouraging local families to use compact fluorescent bulbs in their homes and donating these bulbs to low-income families in Philadelphia. These bulbs use about 75% less energy and need replacing ten times less frequently than incandescent bulbs.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of “Deep Blue,” the Navy’s anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the “Global War on Terrorism.” He served as President Clinton’s Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.